

**Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Rocky Mountain Junior High School
4350 West 4800 South
West Haven City, Utah 84315**

April 7-8, 2005



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Rocky Mountain Junior High School
4350 West 4800 South
West Haven City, Utah 84315**

April 7-8, 2005

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

**Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS**

Christine Kearl, Associate Superintendent

**Brett Moulding, Director
Curriculum and Instruction**

**Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist
Curriculum and Instruction**

Salt Lake City, Utah

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ii
Utah State Board of Education	iii
Weber School District Board of Education and District Administration	1
Rocky Mountain Junior High School Administration and Staff.....	2
Rocky Mountain Junior High School Mission Statement and Belief Statements	4
Members of the Visiting Team	5
Visiting Team Report.....	6
Chapter 1: School Profile.....	6
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry.....	7
Chapter 2: The Self-Study Process	7
Chapter 3: Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness	8
Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals	8
Curriculum Development.....	9
Quality Instructional Design	10
Quality Assessment Systems	12
Leadership for School Improvement	12
Community Building	15
Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning.....	17
Chapter 4: Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) Standards I-XI	17
Chapter 5: School Improvement Efforts – Action Plan	18
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team	18

FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 7-8, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Rocky Mountain Junior High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Kathleen Nye is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Rocky Mountain Junior High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Rocky Mountain Junior High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

250 East 500 South
P. O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

District 1

Teresa L. Theurer
66 Canterbury Circle
Logan, UT 84321
Phone: (435) 753-0740

District 6

Tim Beagley
3974 South 3550 West
West Valley City, UT 84119
Phone: (801) 969-6454

District 11

Bill Colbert
14862 S Coalville Way
Draper, UT 84020
Phone: (801) 572-1608

District 2

Greg W. Haws
5841 West 4600 South
Hooper, UT 84315
Phone: (801) 985-7980

District 7

John C. Pingree
1389 Harvard Avenue
Salt Lake City, UT 84105
Phone: (801) 582-5635

District 12

Mark Cluff
645 West Hubbard Cir
Alpine, UT 84004
Phone: (801) 756-7623

District 3

Edward Dalton
1323 Bryan Road
Erda, UT 84074
Phone: (435) 882-4498

District 8

Janet A. Cannon
5256 Holladay Blvd.
Salt Lake City, UT 84117
Phone: (801) 272-3516

District 13

Thomas Gregory
1056 West 1150 South
Provo, UT 84601
Phone: (801) 607-4702

District 4

Richard Sadler
875 Edgewood Dr.
Ogden, UT 84403
Phone: (801) 479-7988

District 9

Gary C. Swensen
1101 Framewood Ln
Taylorsville, UT 84123
Phone: (801) 281-8746

District 14

Dixie Allen
218 West 5250 North
Vernal, UT 84078
Phone: (435) 789-0534

District 5

Kim R. Burningham
932 Canyon Crest Drive
Bountiful, UT 84010
Phone: (801) 292-9261

District 10

Laurel Brown
5311 So. Lucky Clover Ln
Murray, UT 84123
Phone: (801) 261-4221

District 15

Debra G. Roberts
Box 1780
Beaver, UT 84713
Phone: (435) 438-5843

Bonnie Jean Beesley*

1492 East Kristianna Cir.
Salt Lake City, UT 84103
Phone: (801) 359-0295

Sara V. Sinclair*

1340 North 1500 East
Logan, UT 84341-2851
Phone: (435) 754-0216

Patti Harrington

Executive Officer

Twila B. Affleck

Secretary

WEBER SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Jerry DeGroot.....	President
Brent Richardson	Vice President
Allen Berrett.....	Member
Cheryl Ferrin	Member
Sharilyn Gerber	Member
Earl Heninger.....	Member
Jon Ritchie.....	Member

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Michael Jacobson.....	Superintendent
Reid Newey.....	Director, Career Technology Education
Laura Swenson.....	Director, Student Services
Mary Johnston.....	Supervisor, Secondary Education
Dr. Robert Peterson.....	Business Manager
Drew Wilson	Director, Buildings and Grounds
Drew Wilson	Supervisor, Transportation and Maintenance
Roger Bailey	Supervisor, Elementary Education
Kathy Harris.....	Supervisor, School Lunch

ROCKY MOUNTAIN JUNIOR HIGH

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Kathleen H. Nye..... Principal
Curtis VandenBosch Assistant Principal

Counseling

Ron Farnsworth..... Counselor
Kathy Lynch..... Counselor
Kami Paulsen..... Counselor
Brandy Fowers..... Counselor

Support Staff

Secretaries\Aides

Connie Brown
Shirley Stokes
Nanette Hodges
Brenda Meibos
Barbara Allred
Leslie Beus
Mitch Border
Haylee Moser
Jo Taylor
Laraine Decker

Diana Wheeler

Lunchroom Personnel

Linda Tingey
Elizabeth Brown
Shawna Carmichael
Kristy Casperson
Marcia Harvey
Carrie Quartuccio
Jalene Weston

Custodians

Gordon Millard
Trent Anderson

Officer

Craig Tillet

Nurse

Kelle Wayment

Faculty

Ron Anderson
Bettie Armstrong
Ulrike Arrowsmith
Marion Beal
Patrice Behunin
Casey Birkholz
Susan Brockbank
Janine Call
Gary Davis
Lisa Draper

Scott Eddington
Linda Fox
Shawn Gardner
Tamara Green
Annette Harmon
Christy Heyer
Laura Higgins
Gary Hinds
Debbie Jackson
Rich Lambert

Cami Larsen
Wendy Long
Jane Martin
Charles McAbery
Michelle McKinley
Pete Miller
Shelley Moser
Suzan Oberhansly
Stacie Palmer
Sherry Patton

Karl Powell
Scott Rogers
Thomas Saunders

Marcella Schow
Denise Sly
Trudy Sportsman

Mark Storey
Adam Suttlemyre
Rachel Urban

ROCKY MOUNTAIN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

We prepare today's students for tomorrow's world.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe

- Students and staff need a safe, inviting learning environment.
- A partnership among students, educators, parents, and community will foster student achievement.
- Students need opportunities to practice social and life skills.
- Teachers should model lifelong learning skills.
- Students need a variety of instructional methods and assessments.
- The school community should prepare students to be productive members of society.
- Literacy and numeracy are essential to all learning.
- Each classroom must have adequate and appropriate technology.
- The school community should foster tolerance, respect, diversity, individual responsibility, and trust.
- Deserved recognition, and positive reinforcement promote self-worth and success.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Verneita R. Hunt, Cottonwood Elementary School, Granite School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Howard Adams, Syracuse Junior High School, Davis County School District

Mary Rhodes, Cottonwood High School, Granite School District

Douglas Sill, Syracuse Junior High School, Davis County School District

G. Norma Villar, Oquirrh Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

ROCKY MOUNTAIN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Rocky Mountain Junior High currently serves students in the 7th, 8th, and 9th grades from the communities of Hooper, West Haven, Kaneshville, and Taylor. The elementary schools that feed into Rocky Mountain Junior High are Hooper, Country View, West Haven, and Kaneshville. Rocky Mountain students feed into Fremont High School.

The Rocky Mountain Junior High staff consists of a principal, an assistant principal, one full-time and three part-time counselors, 39 teachers, one media specialist, four secretaries, seven aides, two full-time custodians, and one computer technician and one resource officer who share their time with Wahlquist Junior High School.

In an effort to better utilize the facilities throughout the district, the boundaries for the school were modified for the 2004-2005 school year. The changes resulted in a loss of about 200 students and several teaching and aide positions. The general makeup of the school has changed slightly, but the school has benefited from the new boundaries. The problems and difficulties of overcrowding have been somewhat alleviated. Having fewer students has provided an increased opportunity for participation and involvement in group activities and teams.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?*

The Visiting Team found Rocky Mountain Junior High School's mission and belief statements to be clear and concise, which helps facilitate clear and concise leadership. With such decisive simplicity to guide the way, student achievement should follow suit with success.

The overall format of the school's profile was easy to follow and analyze. Charts were large and readily understood. Various chart formats helped disseminate information with little written explanation needed. These charts gave a broad picture of the demographics and student achievement disaggregated over a comprehensive set of data. The Visiting Team found it quite easy to understand and analyze the school profile because of the easy format used.

The focus group reports were short and to the point, including potential areas of growth in each section. The Visiting Team gained a brief yet global understanding of where the school community was headed as to student achievement just by reading the School Profile.

- b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

Although an introduction to Rocky Mountain Junior High School was included in the school profile, the Visiting Team recommends that more history be included. The school was only eleven years old at the time of the accreditation visit, a history that should be easy to include.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- The Visiting Team recommends that a school-wide assessment system be put in place for gathering, organizing, and reporting data and information and reviewing action plan steps. Multiple methods of assessing student performance should be explored and implemented.
- The Visiting Team also recommends that departments continue to find ways to improve cross-curricular integration.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The Visiting Team found that parents, teachers, students, and administrators were involved in the accreditation process from the beginning. Departments, as well as focus groups, took part in developing the profile and working through committees contributing data, analyses, strengths, and suggestions for improvement. Together these groups of people formulated the action plan utilizing compiled information.

The Visiting Team found evidence that student achievement was the first and foremost goal of the school community. Teachers, parents, students, and administrators reflected on the data collected and on resulting conclusions to create an atmosphere of greater learning and student achievement. The faculty members worked well with each other, respecting the school's environment of collegiality. Students emulated this relationship.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The Visiting Team found that the school's self-study process accurately mirrored its current strengths and limitations. The teachers, students, parents, and administration were honest about their weak points as well as their strong points.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Rocky Mountain Junior High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Lifelong Learning
Indicators:
 - Students will develop literacy and numeracy skills, along with basic knowledge in social studies, science, technology, healthy lifestyles and an appreciation for culture and the arts.
2. Complex Thinking and Problem Solving
Indicators:
 - Students will gain reasoning, logic, problem-solving and study skills.
 - Students will use these skills in the confines of the classroom and gain the ability and confidence to gather and use information in future education and throughout life.
 - Students will be exposed to existing and emerging technology.
3. Communication and Collaboration
Indicators:
 - Students will be willing and able to receive and share ideas clearly, both verbally and in writing.
 - Students will develop communication and social skills in order to be a valuable part of a team, or a team leader.
4. Responsible Citizenship
Indicators:
 - Students will learn in the classroom a broad spectrum of core values including: tolerance, respect, responsibility, accountability honesty, integrity, and trust, which will contribute to their future employability.
 - Students will demonstrate understanding of their responsibility to society by following school rules, policies, and procedures.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The Visiting Team found evidence that, to a large extent, the school facilitates the collaborative process, building a shared vision for the school. Rocky Mountain Junior High School did an excellent job of building collaboration with teachers,

students, parents, and staff. Parents were consulted and gave recommendations to the school team as they focused on building a shared vision through the mission statement. The classified personnel were also stakeholders as the school team built the school vision. Some of the classified personnel did not have a good understanding of what accreditation was all about, but they did know that it was going on.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

Rocky Mountain Junior High's belief statements are well thought out and support the mission statement, guiding the desired results for student learning. The belief statements clearly demonstrate that the administration and staff are committed to student achievement.

The belief statements included expectations of teachers within the confines of lifelong learning and the school community. The teachers are commended for creating high expectations for themselves, considering the whole school community rather than focusing only on the students.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The DRSLs are closely aligned to the school's mission and belief statements. From discussions of the creation of the DRSLs with the focus group, it was apparent that the mission and belief statements drove the selection of the school's desired results for student learning.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

The curriculum of Rocky Mountain Junior High is based on clearly defined standards—the Utah State Core Curriculum and the Utah Life Skills. Most classrooms have posted on their dry erase boards the lessons not only for the day but also for the week, and in some instances for the entire quarter.

The Visiting Team found that some departments meet often to ensure that the curriculum is on target with the Utah Core Curriculum. It is recommended that all departments work inter- and intra-departmentally to ensure that the State Core is extensively taught. Curriculum mapping is a researched-based strategy that should be explored.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Curriculum development at Rocky Mountain Junior High is clearly defined through the school's belief statements and DRSLs, which reflect back to the mission statement.

The Visiting Team found, through discussions with teachers, that there is informal dialogue between some departments. There is also evidence of both formal and informal intra/inter-departmental collaboration. However, it is suspected that there is room for improvement and for formal intra/inter-departmental dialogue. There is evidence to support school-wide collaboration—especially from the last year's focus groups and discussions among the entire faculty.

Through their action plan, Rocky Mountain Junior High School teachers will work collaboratively to improve reading skills across the curriculum, use researched-based best instructional practices, and expand use of the Six Traits of Writing.

Teachers will also increase other social, verbal, and academic skills of the students through appropriate modeling and dialogue with the rest of the faculty. This initiative is in the early stages of implementation. It is suggested that the Curriculum Development Focus Group meet on a more regular basis to keep the channels of cooperative dialogue open for the entire faculty.

In conjunction with the school's mission statement, some of the faculty has expressed the desire to explore increasing the number of elective classes available for students. Some possibilities are a "0" or 8th period (before/after school), on-line keyboards, summer school, etc.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

The Visiting Team observed a variety of methods used to engage students, including direct instruction, students working cooperatively with one another while the teacher is working with other students, working on computers, reading silently, and hands-on activities.

The Visiting Team found, through discussion with the administration and teachers, that the various departments have been using faculty meetings as professional development opportunities, exploring various research-based best

instructional practices. The Visiting Team observed many instances of such practices during the visit.

Additionally, students have the opportunity to participate in various fairs at the school, district, and state level. A variety of extracurricular activities are provided as well.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The Visiting Team was impressed with the degree to which the faculty and administration of Rocky Mountain Junior High School are committed to the educational improvement of all students. Real-life learning happens when students are physically engaged and find purpose in the subject matter being taught.

In some classrooms, a variety of teaching strategies were observed and discussed. There was a rotation process (a “changing of the guard,” as they call it), the Total Physical Response System, cooperative learning groups, hands-on learning, in-class demonstrations, and teacher modeling.

The Visiting Team learned through student interviews that the students appreciate teachers who use multiple teaching strategies.

The Visiting Team encourages all teachers to continue and expand their study of research-based best practices, including differentiation. Understanding implementation takes time, and the Visiting Team encourages the teachers to use these strategies with students and with each other during professional development opportunities.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

The Visiting Team observed the Options Program that is set up to help students who are in danger of failing. These students are identified by the counselors and invited to register for this study skills class. The students may be enrolled anywhere from a semester to a full year. The students have provided positive feedback to the Visiting Team about the improvement brought about by the class in their grades and study skills.

The Instructional Design Focus Group provided information about an after-school tutoring program that is held three times a week. Low-achieving algebra students are identified for a specific class of math called Algebra, in which the basic math skills are taught. This type of help given to students confirms that Rocky Mountain Junior High School is committed to increasing student achievement. Class size is limited to twenty-two students.

The staff also is available to help students before and after school.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Rocky Mountain Junior High uses the Iowa Tests and SAT, as well as the Utah Core Test (CRTs) results for school-wide assessment. The Visiting Team found some classes are using a variety of assessment tools, such as written tests, quizzes, open-ended questions, performance tasks, projects, portfolios, oral presentations, research projects, etc., to monitor individual student achievement.

The Visiting Team found through discussion with the Assessment Focus Group that a school-wide assessment system is not in place yet. The group will further explore such systems and create an assessment system for gathering, organizing, and reporting data and information, as well as reviewing action plan steps. As multiple methods of assessing student performance are presented to the faculty, they should be implemented.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

The Visiting Team found that the assessment of student learning is done mainly on a departmental or classroom level rather than on a school-wide basis, except for the UPASS state testing requirements. Development of a school-wide, multi-layered assessment system will help create data of who is not learning and why.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

The standardized tests appear to be administered in a fair and equitable manner. However, most individual classrooms rely on traditional assessment methods that serve a purpose but do not necessarily address the individual needs of students. Again, a school-wide assessment program will be helpful in raising student achievement.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The school climate at Rocky Mountain Junior High School is one that emphasizes the importance of academic learning, and the leadership has taken steps to

increase that emphasis. The faculty acknowledged the reduced number of assemblies in the last few years, and the students reported fewer tardy problems because of increased administrative presence in the halls. The correct balance between academic time in class and the learning that takes place in other activity-based structures is always difficult to determine. Some concern was expressed in favor of each direction, and this discussion might result in some partial solutions. Some baseline data has been gathered to assess any ideas that are implemented.

The Visiting Team found evidence that the school leadership has particularly supported teaching and learning by providing professional development. Two appreciated examples are ongoing “best practices” instruction by the entire school and focused work for smaller groups. A practice manual was developed by one of the teachers after the leadership promoted training. The English Department is immersed in practicing Six Traits of Writing, and the entire school has been exposed to the concept. One result is renewed attention to conventions by the Science Department and other departments. The new format of faculty meetings this year has been well received. Another professional development activity took place as departments presented learning purposes and methods to their colleagues.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

The Visiting Team commends the leadership for data-driven decisions. One example is collection of percentages of students who are reading at grade level, and subsequent plans to implement more reading classes than in the past. This data has also resulted in curricular decisions to emphasize functional and informational reading in English classes. As social studies scores declined, the leadership met with that department to generate ideas and find solutions.

Best practices professional development is a research-based strategy, and the development of the abovementioned manual involved incorporation of further research, expanding the initial concepts. The action plan includes intent to distribute this manual school-wide.

The involvement of the entire faculty in the accreditation process illustrates the leadership's commitment to collaborative decision-making and ability to facilitate the process. Staff members expressed appreciation and increasing confidence in the ability to work collaboratively on decisions for learning.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The Visiting Team found that assessment takes place on various levels in the school. However, there is not a school-wide system for collection of this data and further analysis. It is recommended that an assessment system be put in place for

gathering, organizing, and reporting data and information, as well as reviewing action plan steps. Multiple methods of assessing student performance should be explored and implemented.

Given that a solidifying assessment system will be put in place, there are many other assessments used in the school. The leadership monitors student achievement through attention to CRT scores, the Direct Writing Assessment, and the Iowa Tests. Further, school data gathered on individual students' results in scheduling changes to facilitate improved instructional delivery. One example is change of placement for low-ability math students. In the future, attention to GPAs at the school level and other local measures may inform collaborative work and result in consistent delivery for students. As school improvement efforts continue, a systematic delegation of responsibility for data gathering and data analysis will facilitate efficiency of a difficult process.

The Visiting Team found that the school maintains an impressive school web page and all of the accreditation documents may be found on the web page. This allows communication and convenient access to information for stakeholders. The web page is one component that may be useful in systematizing data collection.

Incident data is part of student achievement, and the administration has recently improved the anecdotal process for student referrals. The school uses Edline software, which tracks incident data in a central location that allows teachers to write comments on students. The comments are sent immediately to the administrator electronically.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The Visiting Team found that the leadership of Rocky Mountain Junior High School demonstrates the ability to operate the school in an organized manner. One example is the efficient allocation of facility space and the maintenance of an orderly and clean environment. Students were emphatic in expressing appreciation for the cleanliness of the building. They were also clear in vocalizing feelings of safety.

Others generally perceive resource allocation as equitable and sufficient in a climate of limited funds. Two exceptions were noted: a repeated concern about minimal access to technology and computer labs, and a more isolated concern about class size.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The Visiting Team discovered that the Rocky Mountain Junior High School Community Council has exhibited a concerted effort to allocate Trust Lands funding to school goals and teacher needs. Teachers can submit requests to the council, and these requests are scrutinized based on criteria aligned with school goals.

The administrative leadership and the leadership team of the accreditation process have aligned the school goals, desired results for student learning, and school improvement efforts in a cohesive action plan. If implemented as written, the action plan will achieve coherent resource allocation, and the rubric that is an inherent part of the action plan will promote such implementation.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The Visiting Team noted the school leadership team has communicated a vision of shared responsibility for student learning and has enabled the school community to become part of that process. Parent representation on the focus groups was visible, and contributions were authentic. Commitment from the leadership team permeated throughout the faculty, and participation was evident and achieving accelerated momentum.

Time is necessary for parents to participate and collaborative work to take place. Exploration of configurations to give stakeholders time to meet may enable pursuit of community goals. Teachers collaborating departmentally, in cross-curricular structures, and in organizational teams for school improvement may experience a sense of renewal if time can be found when other duties do not infringe.

The faculty has much expertise in different areas, and mechanisms for sharing such practice with each other can expand the expertise and sense of community. Some attention to in-house technology and “best practice” professional development is addressed somewhat in the action plan. Furthering this strategy can achieve consistency and enhanced learning for students. Overall, the leadership team is applauded for a successful school improvement initiative.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team found that the students, faculty, administration, staff, and community of Rocky Mountain Junior High School have developed a strong,

positive relationship that promotes the mission statement of the school: “We prepare today’s students for tomorrow’s world.”

Rocky Mountain Junior High School has an impressive network of community building and working relationships. Direct advisement of the school by Dr. Kathie Nunley, Steve Ramirez, and Wendy Chalk is demonstrated in the excellent organization of the school community with regard to the Utah State Accreditation guidelines. Equally important is the manner in which the desired results for student learning (DRSLs) of the school were established, with stakeholders (parents and students) included in the early establishment and development of those DRSLs. Parents responded to an invitation sent home in the quarterly newsletter to offer their ideas about desired results for student learning. Many proposed DRSL statements were generated from these initial ideas and condensed to ten highly effective and manageable beliefs.

The teachers, administration, and parents associated with Rocky Mountain Junior High School have created a great bonding of interrelationships within the community. There are four groups of stakeholders that make up the community at Rocky Mountain Junior High: the students; the faculty, administrators, and staff; the parents; and the extra-school community.

The indicators of community development within Rocky Mountain Junior High are as follows: (1) The students have a high degree of pride, respect, and expectation for themselves, the school, and others. Indicators of this positive student development are the display in the students’ actions and words, indicators of good moral development. The students support each other through peer teaching and peer mediators. Students demonstrate positive behavior in the halls and classrooms. There has been a decrease in the number of behavior incidents over the past three years. The Visiting Team observed a high degree of respect and trust among the students and their teachers. (2) The interrelations and support of goals by the faculty are demonstrated with the inclusion of reading improvement programs and strategies across the curriculum in the school. The faculty’s department heads and members are beginning to understand the needs and wants of other departments and the whole school in relationship to their own requests. (3) There is a universal, school-wide acceptance and support of students in the resource situations in the school. There are some severely handicapped students in the school, and there are regular education students assigned to each special education student for mentoring and tutoring. The mentors willingly serve these special students. (4) There is great support among parents and the extra-school community for the athletic and scholastic programs in which the school participates. (5) There is community involvement in the form of donations of goods and services that benefit the school community.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The Visiting Team observed that Rocky Mountain Junior High School demonstrates collaborative networks through commitment to a school-wide emphasis on reading programs, school-wide development of discipline strategies, and demonstration of high expectations in curricula. Some classes visited by the Visiting Team presented teaching/learning situations that involved problem-based inquiry, hands-on activities, and classroom discussion in exploration of ideas, concepts, and principles. A trained peer tutor system was used to support many students in a variety of situations and environments within the school.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The Visiting Team found evidence that the Rocky Mountain Junior High School faculty demonstrates an ongoing commitment to professional development. Teachers have been attending training sessions and seminars in specific curriculum areas and researched-based best instructional practices. There has been some concern that some areas of the curriculum do not have the number of workshops and professional development opportunities that were once available because of the current emphasis on the NCLB requirements.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The administration at Rocky Mountain Junior High School allocates time and financial backing for teachers to attend numerous workshops, conferences, and professional development opportunities. Teachers are encouraged to work within the school-wide programs that have been developed. The entire faculty supports this action, which enhances the degree of ownership of student achievement.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, only by the USOE—it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The Visiting Team found that the Rocky Mountain Junior High School action plan was a direct result of analyses of school data and the departmental and focus groups' reports. The teachers, students, parents, staff, and administration were very honest in the assessment of their strong and weak areas. As a consolidated whole, the faculty is very devoted to student achievement and committed to making changes that will positively affect achievement. This thinking is reflected in the school's action plan.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The Visiting Team found that the Rocky Mountain Junior High School community's commitment is very strong for implementing their action plan. The department chairs and administration were determined to look at data critically and analyze information throughout the accreditation term. The Visiting Team is confident that action steps and goals will be followed through, year after year.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

As the Visiting Team observed and interviewed teachers, students, and the administration, it was clear that the action plan would continue to be implemented. Data and assessment are constantly being used to evaluate student achievement according to Utah State Core Standards. Rocky Mountain Junior High School's plan includes teamwork and collaboration that will continue to be the focus for class instruction.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- Rocky Mountain Junior High School's administration, teachers, staff, students, and community are commended for their extensive and collaborative work on the self-evaluation process and professional development. Individuals have risen above personal wants and needs to create a wonderful, broad vision for the whole school community.

- The Visiting Team commends Rocky Mountain Junior High School for its mission and belief statements and DRSLs, which greatly emphasize the community as a whole, focusing on Lifelong Learning, Complex Thinking and Problem Solving, Communication and Collaboration, and Responsible Citizenship for everyone.
- Rocky Mountain Junior High School's administration, teachers, and staff are commended for their devotion to students. It is very apparent that students are the focus of the school. Along with academics, students are taught life and character skills. Students are treated with great respect; consequently, students treat adults and each other with great respect.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration and faculty for creating a clear, concise action plan complete with rubrics for assessment. The action plan is a result of this school's focus on and deep commitment to improvement of student achievement.
- The Visiting Team is impressed with Rocky Mountain Junior High School's website, which includes the accreditation data, information, and action plan. The community has access to all of the accreditation documents, including updates. This promotes a sense of continuous improvement and builds relationships with the community.
- Rocky Mountain Junior High School's administration, teachers, staff, students, and community are highly commended for creating a community of caring and an environment where students feel safe, respected, trusted, and loved. Thus, the students reciprocate with respect, trust, and admiration for the school-wide team. In such a setting, learning is at an optimum level.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that a school-wide assessment system be set in place for gathering, organizing, and reporting data and information, as well as reviewing action plan steps. Multiple methods of assessing student performance should be explored and implemented.
- It is recommended that Rocky Mountain Junior High School further explore areas for inter- and intra-department collaboration. Research shows that collaboration is an essential part of a healthy learning environment.
- It is recommended that improvement of student writing skills be practiced throughout the school. Writing is a critical part of student education and should permeate all academic areas.

- It is recommended that the administration and teachers further their professional development in the areas of researched-based best instructional practices, differentiation, using data to drive classroom instruction, and various assessment areas.
- Technology is a proven life skill. It is recommended that students be exposed to further use of technology in academic areas. Without these skills, students will not be prepared for their future professions.